

Testimony in opposition of Senate Bill 184 and House Bill 5262

February 28, 2022

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I, Linda Dalessio hereby strongly oppose SB 184 and SB 5262 for the following reasons:

To Chairman Flexer and Fox, ranking members Sen. Sampson and representative Mastrofrancesco, and other members of the election committee.

When you took office, you swore to uphold the following Article 11 of the Connecticut Constitution.

Members of the general assembly, and all officers, executive and judicial, shall, before they enter on the duties of their respective offices, take the following oath or affirmation, to wit:

You do solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be) that you will support the **constitution of the United States, and the constitution of the state of Connecticut**, so long as you continue a citizen thereof; and that you will faithfully discharge, according to law, the duties of the office of.....to the best of your abilities. So help you God.

Bill 184 clearly violates the Connecticut Constitution which you all swore under oath to uphold. We have many viral illnesses every year, yet we have never had widespread mail-in solicitation of absentee votes for an “illness”. Bill 184 is vague and unclear in language and fails to define illness. Is it a personal illness, recent illness, past illness, family illness, friend’s illness, a pet’s illness? Our Constitution clearly states that the reasons for absentee balloting are military service, out of town, **personal** illness, physical disability, religious reasons, election worker or official. If these conditions are met voters can easily request an absentee ballot from their town clerk, like they have done for years. Introducing vague and unclear language into absentee balloting without a constitutional amendment violates our current Connecticut Constitution and is a violation of voter rights, voter integrity and is illegal. Legislatures and senators have sworn an oath to uphold our Constitution and have no right to violate it.

The Covid 19 pandemic is clearly over by public health data, and hospitalization rates. Covid is endemic and is on par with the seasonal flu. There is no reason to have widespread absentee ballot mailing or requests for an unspecified illness, similar to what was done in 2020, and again fraudulently done in certain towns in Connecticut in 2021. This by law requires a constitutional amendment. In the 2020 election the Secretary of State mailed out a total of 716,214 unsolicited absentee ballots during the pandemic. Of those ballots 184,000 were returned as undeliverable and 50,617 were never returned. What happened to those ballots? Were the 184,000 residents removed from our voter rolls? This massive mailing of unsolicited absentee ballots cost taxpayers in excess of \$6 million dollars. This is fiscally irresponsible.

The absentee ballot return rate in 2020 resulted in 35.43% of votes cast by absentee ballot, and only 0.94% of the returned absentee ballots were rejected when normally 2% of absentee ballots have been rejected in previous years. Register of voters and town clerks were given no additional support to count this 5x increase of absentee ballots and verify that these were actual voters who lived in Connecticut and were eligible to vote. There is a clear lack of resources and revenue for accurate verification of absentee ballots.

Connecticut does not have specific checks and balances in place that would protect against voter fraud. This includes video monitoring of absentee ballot boxes so that ballot harvesting cannot occur. Connecticut also lacks signature verification on absentee ballot envelopes. Until these measures can be put into place to move forward with widespread absentee balloting with a vague description of illness is unconstitutional and will further erode voters trust in our election integrity and our elected officials.

I ask you as a Connecticut voter, why now would the good senators and legislatures of Connecticut, who swore to uphold our Connecticut Constitution, want to unconstitutionally change our election laws? Massive voter integrity issues have been raised in states such as Arizona, Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. To think that such voter fraud could not occur in Connecticut is disingenuous and disenfranchises every voter who has questions about our voter roll maintenance and our election integrity processes.

Thank-you.